

**COUNTY OF SUFFOLK
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**



**THOMAS J. SPOTA
DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

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Coram Hit and Run driver who killed jogger pleads guilty

31-year-old Thomas Costa of Coram pleaded guilty today to Leaving the Scene of a Motor Vehicle Accident resulting in Death or Serious Physical Injury, Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota announced today.

Costa struck and killed Karen Benjamin, 56, as she jogged on a Sunday morning last June in Mount Sinai. The victim died July 17 after being comatose for three and a half weeks.

An eyewitness provided police with a partial description of Costa's car, DA Spota said, and after a forensic analysis of car parts collected at the scene of the collision, and the Suffolk County Police Department's Vehicle Crimes Unit narrowed the field of eligible BMW's to the model and year.

"After a house-to-house canvass in the vicinity of the hit and run, detectives found a damaged BMW in the rear yard at Costa's parents' house," DA Spota said. "It is difficult to believe the maximum sentence for this prior convicted felon is only two and one-third to seven years behind bars," District Attorney Spota said. "This crime deserves the same sentence as manslaughter, a five to 15 year incarceration, and I urge residents to contact your elected state officials to tell them hit and run drivers who are captured and prosecuted must face tougher consequences for their actions."

Costa, who also pleaded guilty to speeding, received a sentencing promise from the court of two to six years imprisonment. Sentencing is scheduled for January 13 in Central Islip.



SCDA COMMUNICATIONS
Robert.Clifford@suffolkcountyny.gov

Be advised that a charge is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

